

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6132

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4195

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KN, KS, US, KU

SUBJ: REACTION TO PANMUNJOM INCIDENT

REF: (A) STATE 211862, (B) KUWAIT 4152, (C) KUWAIT 4159

1. NO MEMBER OF EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED COMMENT FROM GOK OFFICIALS ON AUGUST 18 INCIDENT AT PANMUMJOM. NEWS STORIES ON INCIDENT CONFINED TO WIRE SERVICE SUMMARIES (EXCEPT AS NOTED BELOW) AND KUWAITI ATTENTION TO INCIDENT CLEARLY PERIPHERAL.

2. EFFECT ON KOREAN ISSUE AT UN. AS NOTED REFTEL B, EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT GOK WAS SURPRISED AND SOMEWHAT IRRITATED TO LEARN THAT KOREAN RESOLUTION AT NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE WAS PASSED BY CONSENSUS WHEN GOK DELEGATION HAD NOT EVEN SEEN TEXT, AND THAT GOK WILL "MAKE ITS POSITION CLEAR" ON KOREAN QUESTION DURING UNGA. WE DOUBT THAT PANMUNJOM INCIDENT HAD MARKED EFFECT ON GOK THINKING REGARDING KOREAN ISSUE AT UN.

3. KUWAITI PRESS. KUWAITI ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS CONTAINED ONE EDITORIAL WHICH, RATHER THAN REPRESENTING GOK VIEW OR BROAD KUWAITI PUBLIC SENTIMENT, PROBABLY COINCIDES ONLY WITH VIEWS OF SMALL LEFTIST MINORITY IN KUWAIT. KUWAIT TIMES OF AUGUST 21 CONTAINED BACK PAGE EDITORIAL WHICH NOTED THAT SECSTATE HAD PROPOSED DIRECT TALKS WITH NORTH KOREA, WHICH PYONGYANG REJECTED, AND THAT, THEREFORE, IT WAS "NATURAL"

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THAT THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE ADOPED A PRO-NORTH KOREAN

RESOLUTION. HBZDR. KISSINGER UNSUCCESSFULLY TRIED TO ABORT THE RESOLUTION BY STIRRING AN ARMED CRISIS IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA, AND TRYING TO DIVERT THE THIRD WORLD'S ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE SUPPORT TO NORTH KOREA..AMERICAN TROOPS IN SOUTH KOREA VIOLATED THE ARMISTICE AGREEMENT AND BEGAN CLEARING TREES (OF ALL THINGS) ON WEDNESDAY (OF ALL THE DAYS) AND PROVOKED A CLASH... AS IS FAMILIAR IN ALL SUCH PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS, THE WESTERN MEDIA IS TELLING THE WORLD ONLY ABOUT QUOTE NORTH KOREAN AGGRESSION UNQUOTE AND THE QUOTE KILLING OF THE TWO AMERICAN OFFICERS UNQUOTE, WITHOUT MENTIONING THAT THE US TROOPS PROVOKED THE INCIDENT...THE PENTAGON HAS MERELY USED THE PRETEXT TO RUSH MORE TROOPS AND PLANES TO SOUTH KOREA..."

4. ONE ARABIC NEWSPAPER, AL WATAN, CARRIED SEVERAL NORTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS ON INCIDENT (PROBABLY PAID FOR BY LOCAL NORTH KOREAN TRADE REP REF C) DURING WEEK FOLLOWING PANMUNJON INCIDENT. THESE INCLUDED STATEMENTS BY NORTH KOREAN ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF AND FOREIGN MINISTRY.

5. SAME ARABIC NEWSPAPER CARRIED FAIRLY OBJECTIVE BYLINE ARTICLE BY KUWAITI NEWSMAN (WHO WAS IN NORTH KOREA DURING INCIDENT) ON HISTORY OF KOREAN NORTH/SOUTH TENSIONS (AUGUST 21). REGARDING AUGUST 18 INCIDENT, ARTICLE MERELY NOTED THAT THE EXPLANATIONS OF BOTH SIDES CONTRADICTED EACH OTHER AND THAT INCIDENT NOT LIKELY TO LEAD TO WAR.

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